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How to Cope With Terrorism

It began as a routine nighttime drive down a country road the security agent had traveled a dozen times before. Suddenly he glimpsed a car speeding up from the rear—coming much too fast. He jammed the accelerator to the floor—and within seconds was blinded up ahead by the flashing lights of an ambulance parked astraddle the narrow road. To avoid hitting the ambulance, the agent hit a button on the floorboard that locked his rear wheels, throwing the car into a screeching, 180-degree turn. He then roared down a gravel road to the left—only to run into a horseshoe of automobile headlights and a deafening volley of rifle shots. The agent had only a split second to realize that the terrorists' trap had been sprung. Then it was all over.

Fortunately for "the agent" in this case, it was not all over; the pursuit car, the ambulance and the deadly finale—performed with blanks—were all part of a weeklong training program for corporate security officers. The scene was a placid tract in the Blue Ridge Mountains of West Virginia, 100 miles west of Washington, D.C. The principal instructors were Charles Vance, a fourteen-year veteran of the Secret Service and son-in-law of former President Gerald Ford, and William Scott, who earned a doctorate in geophysics at Yale but would much rather drive automobiles at triple-digit speeds. Their mission: to teach corporate security men how to protect their executive bosses from shootings, bombings, kidnappings and other terrorist acts.

Vance and Scott are newcomers to a fast-growing business. Spurred by the fear—and reality—of terrorism, many American companies, most of them multinationals,

have set up sophisticated programs to protect executives at home and abroad. As part of the program, they bring in outfits like Pinkerton's Inc. and Burns International for consultation. Some companies also send security men for field training by firms like Vance's MVM, Inc. Other consultants like 63-year-old Mitchell Livingston WerBell III, a former OSS man, mercenary and gun-runner, tend to run one-man shows. WerBell's defensive strategy is simple. "A terrorist has no privileges, no rights and no reason to live," he says. "You kill them."

No one knows for sure how big the corporate security business is today, but it already has its own trade association—the American Society for Industrial Security, with 15,137 members—and some experts predict that sales volume in consultant fees and anti-terrorist hardware could top \$20 billion a year by 1990. Even though the overall statistics suggest only a remote chance that a businessman will be kidnapped or attacked by terrorists, assassination attempts against political figures, and several well-publicized cases of corporate extortion obviously have executives running scared.

No 'Vanity' Plates: Nowadays most major companies have a managerial-level corporate security director who not only supervises conventional security procedures and conducts anti-bugging sweeps but who also takes tips from consultants on how to avoid assaults and kidnapping against executives. Since executives are most apt to be kidnapped on their way to work in the morning, consultants advise that drivers be trained in "evasive" maneuvers. Cars should be as unobtrusive as possible, with no "vanity" license plates. Overseas, traveling in a three-car convoy is *de rigueur*, with

the top executive's armor-plated vehicle in the middle. Routes to the office and the time of departure should vary, and executives are told not to sit near the windows.

The consultants charge dearly for their services. Vance's MVM, Inc., for example, charges \$3,300 for seven days of intensive training in evasive driving, security sweeps, weapons and explosives control. "Five years ago, we would have starved to death," says Vance, whose company netted \$1.4 million after its first calendar year of operation. "Five years from now, we'll be feeling the competition." Some of it undoubtedly will come from WerBell, a right-wing gun enthusiast whose operation in rural Georgia is long on sophistication and longer on firepower. WerBell also trains bodyguards for foreign heads of state and SWAT teams for domestic police departments.

Is all of this corporate security necessary—and worth the cost? Many companies apparently think it is. According to one sample of Fortune 1,000 companies, 63 percent have drawn up detailed crisis-management plans to use in case of emergencies, most of them incorporating beefed-up corporate security teams. It may be expensive, but as Chuck Vance likes to tell his trainees, loose security operations can cost much more in terms of human life and executive capability. "Just your being there may be enough deterrence," he told a recent class. "If you look sharp, if you look like you know what you're doing...it very well may be that will be enough to deter someone."

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